

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 00291 161831Z

12

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 PCH-02 NEA-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 IO-14 DRC-01 /148 W

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R 161745Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4213

INFO USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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DEPT PASS CAIRO AND POUCH SANAA

BEIRUT PASS DAMASCUS AND BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, TS, LY

SUBJECT: CHATTI PRESS CONFERENCE ON TUNISIA-LIBYA MERGER

REF: TUNIS 290

1. FON MIN HABIB CHATTI GAVE PRESS CONFERENCE MORNING
JAN 16 TO SOME FIFTY JOURNALISTS LOCAL AND FOREIGN COMMENTING
ON BACKGROUND OF MERGER AGREEMENT AND GOT DECLARATION OF JAN 15
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PAGE 02 TUNIS 00291 161831Z

POSTPONING REFERENDUM. WE HAVE ONLY
SEEN UPI STORY ON THIS TO DATE WHICH MAKES

FOLLOWING POINTS:

2. TUNISIAN-LIBYAN UNION CAN ONLY OCCUR IN FRAMEWORK OF MAGHREB UNITY. "OUR DESIRE IS THAT THIS UNION NOT BE MADE AGAINST WISHES OF ALGERIA AND MOROCCO. WE DO NOT WISH NOR DO WE WANT THAT FUSION BE ACCOMPLISHED IN A SPIRIT OF DISUNITY IN THE MAGHREB AND WE WON'T DO ANYTHING TO CAUSE THAT. WE WILL DO EVERYTHING SO THAT THIS UNION BE EXTENDED TO ALGERIA AND MOROCCO." (UPI CORRESPONDENT THINKS NUMBER OF FOREIGN JOURNALISTS MISINTERPRETED CHATTI AS MEANING TUNISIA COULD NOT JOIN WITH LIBYA UNLESS ALGERIA AND PERHAPS MOROCCO JOINED UNION TOO.) CHATTI SAID HE WOULD GO BACK TO ALGERIA SOON AND ALSO GO TO RABAT TO "CLARIFY" TWO CAPITALS ON JERBA AGREEMENT. SAID HE HOPED CURRENT REACTIONS IN THESE COUNTRIES WERE TEMPORARY (PASSAGERES). CHATTI SAID THERE WAS NO PRIOR CONSULTATION WITH MOROCCO OR ALGERIA ON UNION NOR WERE THEY INFORMED. HE THEN CITED RECENT HISTORY RE BOURGUIBA'S WORKING FOR MAGHREB UNITY IMPLYING THAT THIS SHOULD HAVE MADE JERBA AGREEMENT UNDERSTANDABLE IN MAGHREB CONTEXT.

3. ON POSTPONEMENT OF REFERENDUM, CHATTI SAID IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION WHETHER REFERENDUM WOULD TAKE PLACE BEFORE MAY BECAUSE OF TUNISIA'S NEED TO REVISE CONSTITUTION, THAT THE QUESTION OF DATE WAS OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE. CHATTI SAID WHEN HE SAW QADHAFI ON JAN 13 LATTER "PERFECTLY UNDERSTOOD" NECESSITY FOR TUNISIAN POSTPONEMENT. HE SAID IT WAS CERTAIN THAT BOURGUIBA WOULD BE PRESIDENT OF THE ARAB ISLAMIC REPUBLIC BECAUSE HE IS OLDEST AND MOST EXPERIENCED, AND LIBYANS GAVE THEIR AGREEMENT TO THIS. SEELYE

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED CAIRO; POUCHED SANAA.

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